

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-21 (Cancelled)

Claim 22. (New) A method of manufacturing a tennis ball, comprising the steps of:

forming a needlefelt by passing a fiber batt through a needlefelting machine having at least one needleboard with barbed needles,

needlefelting the fiber batt such that the needles penetrate the fiber batt in a range of angles including a plurality of angles that are non-perpendicular with respect to the surface of the batt,

cutting or shaping the needlefelt to form a blank adapted at least partially to cover a resilient hollow core, and

adhering the blank to the resilient hollow core.

Claim 23. (New) The method of claim 22 in which the needles pass through the thickness of the batt.

Claim 24. (New) The method of claim 22 in which the batt is curved during needling to provide the range of needle penetration angles.

Claim 25. (New) The method of claim 24 in which the batt is curved in the direction of its travel through the needlefelting machine.

Claim 26. (New) The method of claim 24 in which the needleboard is correspondingly curved.

Claim 27. (New) The method of claim 22 in which the needlefelting machine comprises two needleboards, and the needleboards are respectively disposed to needle the batt from mutually opposite sides of the batt.

Claim 28. (New) The method of claim 27 in which the needles pass through the thickness of the batt.

Claim 29. (New) The method of claim 22 in which the needlefelt includes a scrim and, when the blank is adhered to the resilient hollow core, the scrim is adjacent to the resilient hollow core.

Claim 30. (New) The method of claim 29 in which the batt is needled to the scrim.

Claim 31. (New) The method of claim 22 in which the needlefelt has a fiber density that varies across its thickness.

Claim 32. (New) The method of claim 31 in which the fiber density of the needlefelt decreases from the base of the batt toward an external surface.

Claim 33. (New) The method of claim 31 in which the needles pass transversely through the thickness of the batt.

Claim 34. (New) The method of claim 33 in which the batt comprises a mixture of wool and polyamide fibers.

Claim 35. (New) The method of claim 34 in which the scrim comprises a polyester or polyamide warp knit.